

06 Jul 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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A. GS 1 Related

Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

1. No help for the helps

Context:

The lack of government welfare schemes or one-time monetary assistance to domestic workers has compounded their woes during the lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Issues:

- Though the domestic workers have been hit the most now, the problem is more deep-seated.
- The government in 2014 started working to codify and simplify 44 existing labour laws into four codes.
- One of the codes, the Code on Wages Bill, has been cleared. But the other three codes are yet to be passed by Parliament.
- The Code on Social Security, 2019, introduced in the [Lok Sabha](#) but not yet passed, will subsume eight laws, including the unorganised Workers' Social Security Act, 2008.

- A national policy for domestic workers, which can be a safety net, is still in its draft state.
- A Central Government Act for the welfare of unorganised sector workers is implemented more in the breach across the country.

Way forward:

- Unfortunately, domestic workers fall within the large informal sector where nearly 90% of Indian workers are placed. Therefore, they do not have any recourse to law for safety, payment or welfare.
- There is a need to include all domestic workers, irrespective of the category, in the social security net.
- While there are some legal instruments that give them a degree of protection, such as the Unorganised Social Security Act, 2008 and the Sexual Harassment against Women at Workplace Act, 2013, and some minimum wages provisions at the state level, there is no comprehensive legislation to address the sector.
- Laws to ensure their rights such as minimum wages, regulating the number of working hours, mandating regular holidays as well as addressing physical and sexual harassment must be formalised.
- They must be provided immediate income and livelihood support.

Conclusion:

COVID-19 is going to result in a new normal in many ways, it presents an opportunity and challenge – to enhance the value of the work of care and domestic work, address its deeply gendered nature, and reflect on ensuring their basic rights.

B. GS 2 Related

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. China doubles down on claims on eastern Bhutan boundary

Context:

China has made new territorial claims in its eastern border with Bhutan.

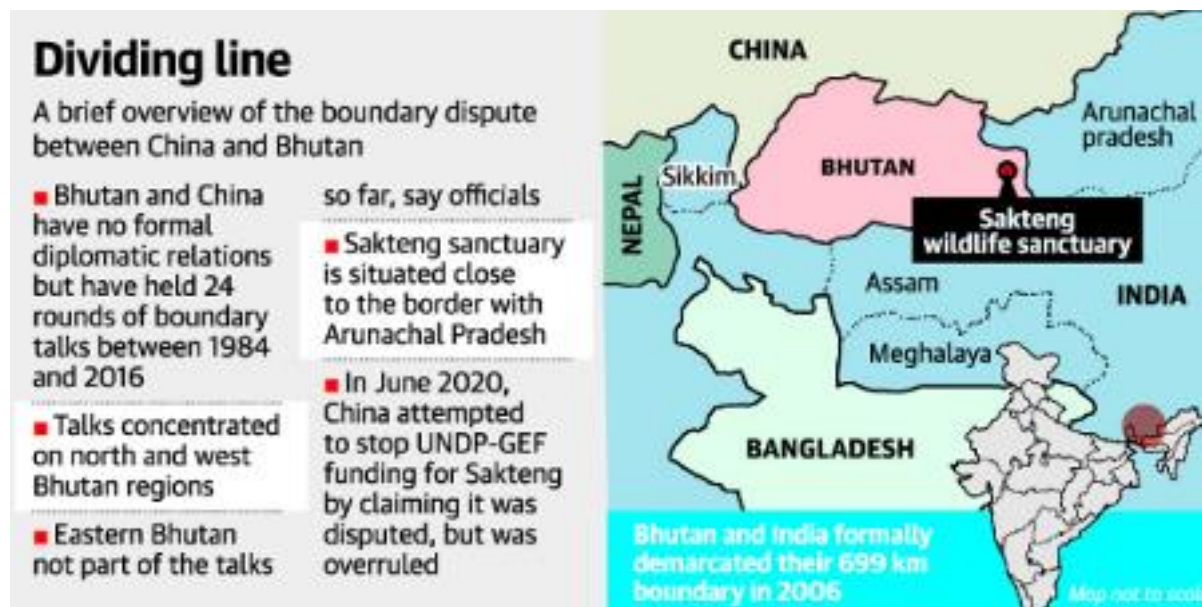
Details:

- Beijing made this claim while objecting to a request to develop the Sakteng wildlife sanctuary in eastern Bhutan's Trashigang district at an online meeting of the Global Environment Facility (GEF).
 - Set up in 1992, GEF is a US-based global body to finance projects in the environment sector.
- Bhutan objected to the Chinese claim, and the GEF council passed the project for funding. The GEF, according to sources, rejected the Chinese claim and approved the project.
- This has caused a boundary dispute between the two countries for the first time.
- The Sakteng sanctuary has in the past, too, received such grants, including in 2018-2019 for a project on preventing soil erosion, without any objection from China.

Concerns:

- Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in a statement, has said "The boundary between China and Bhutan has never been delimited. There have been disputes over the eastern, central and western sectors for a long time".

Boundary dispute between China and Bhutan:



- So far, the talks have been about three specific areas, including Jakarlung and Pasamlung in the north, and the Chumbi Valley, where Doklam is situated, in west Bhutan.
- According to written records, there has been no mention of eastern Bhutan, or Trashigang Dzongkhag (where Sakteng is based, that borders Arunachal Pradesh) in 24 previous rounds of boundary negotiations held between the two countries, between 1984 and 2016.
- The negotiations have not been held since the Doklam stand-off between Indian and Chinese troops in 2017.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. FAO issues locust alert for India

Context:

The [Food and Agriculture Organisation \(FAO\)](#) has said that India, which is tackling the worst locust attack in 26 years, should remain on “high alert” during the next four weeks.

Details:

- Rajasthan is the most affected State in the country.
- The other affected states are Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Haryana and Bihar.
- The Indian government has stepped up efforts and is using equipment such as drones and Bell helicopters to control the menace.

This issue has been covered in the 28th May 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis. [Click here](#) to read.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Issue compulsory licences for generic Remdesivir: CPI(M)

Context:

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) has said that the government should issue compulsory licences for the manufacture of a generic version of Remdesivir, an anti-viral drug being used to treat COVID-19 patients.

Details:

- 'Gilead Sciences' anti-viral drug Remdesivir has shown efficacy in treating COVID-19 patients.
- The statement said while the price of the drug was ₹2.25 lakh or \$3,000 in the U.S., Indian companies were in talks for manufacturing under a Gilead's licence for sale at ₹30,000-₹35,000.

This issue has been covered in the 1st April 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis. [Click here](#) to read.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Re-enfranchise the forgotten voter

Context:

- The article discusses the difficulties faced by the migrant labourer class in exercising their franchise and suggests policy measures to mitigate these challenges.

Background:

- In the light of the pandemic crisis, the [Election Commission of India \(ECI\)](#) has made it possible for **senior citizens above the age of 65 to vote by postal ballot**, given that they are at greater risk from exposure to the novel coronavirus. Previously, this option was available only to disabled citizens and those above 80 years.
- The article argues for a similar empowering approach towards migrant workers.

Details:

Voter turn-out:

- India currently has over 91.05 crore registered voters and in the 2019 general election, a record 67.4%, i.e., 61.36 crore voters, cast their vote.
- Almost one-third, amounting to a substantial 29.68 crore voters, did not cast their vote.

- National Election Study surveys have shown that about 10% of registered voters refrain from voting due to a lack of interest in politics which implies **that around 20 crore voters who want to vote are unable to do so.**
 - This includes about three crores Non-Resident Indians (NRIs). Only about one lakh NRIs have registered to vote, presumably because voting requires their physical presence in India. Of them, about 25,000 voted in the 2019 elections.
 - **A substantial proportion of the voters who are unable to vote would include the migrant labourers.**

Migrant labourers in India:

- **Internal migrant workers constitute about 13.9 crores as in the Economic Survey of 2017**, which is nearly a third of India's labour force.
- They travel across India in search of economic livelihood, in the construction sector, as domestic workers, in brick kilns, mines, transportation, security, agriculture, etc.
- Many never intend to settle down and wish to return to their native villages and towns once their work is completed or the working season ends.
- Often they toil in exploitative low-wage jobs, lacking identity and proper living conditions, without access to welfare and unable to exercise their voting rights.

Challenges:

- The migrant workers face enormous **difficulties in exercising their franchise.**
 - Migrant workers become quasi-disenfranchised, forgotten voters because they **cannot afford to return home on Election Day** to choose their representatives.
 - Internal migrant workers **do not enrol as voters in their place of employment** since they find proof of residence hard to provide.
- Since the migrant workers do not have a vote where they work, their concerns are easy to ignore in their host State. Sometimes, they are targeted for allegedly taking jobs away from the local population.
- This leads to a **callous attitude towards the plight of migrants**. The migrant labourers are considered mostly politically powerless.
 - To enable NRIs to exercise their franchise, the government brought in legislation in the previous Lok Sabha to enable voting through authorised proxies. However, the proposed legislation has lapsed. The lack of such proposals for the internal poor migrants is evident.

Way forward:

Policy measure:

- Similar to the 'One Nation One Ration Card' scheme being ushered in to enable migrant workers and their family members to access Public Distribution System benefits from any fair price shop in the country, there is the need to usher in **'One Nation One Voter ID,' to ensure domestic ballot portability.**
- Migrants should be able to physically vote in their city of work based on the address on their existing voter IDs and the duration of their temporary stay.

Implementation:

- To facilitate voting by migrant workers, the ECI could undertake substantial outreach measures using the network of District Collectorates.
- The COVID-19 crisis mobilized governments and non-governmental organisations to set up registers and portals to reach out to migrant workers. The data available through this can be utilized to register migrant workers.

- Given the developments in digital communications, it is **technologically feasible** to record and transfer votes to their respective constituencies without compromising the credibility of the election process.
- There are operative systems that enable a form of voter portability** that can serve as a model for re-enfranchising migrant workers.
 - Service voters (government employees) posted away from home can vote through the **Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System (ETPBS)**.
 - Classified service voters (e.g., military personnel) can **vote through their proxies**.
 - The ECI has said that it is testing an **Aadhaar-linked voter-ID based solution** to enable electors to cast their votes digitally from anywhere in the country.

Conclusion:

- Voting must be viewed as a civic right. Well-thought-out initiatives that facilitate voting and remove obstacles to voters exercising their franchise must be emphasized on. Ensuring that every Indian voter can participate in elections is imperative to **ensure a democratically inclusive India**.
- The 'One Nation One Voter ID,' approach would help **empower the forgotten migrant voter**. Once migrant workers get to exercise their franchise, there would also be a change in how they are treated.

Category: ECONOMY

1. How to counter China

Context:

- In light of the **ongoing India-China tensions**, the article argues that India's success in countering China's assertiveness will hinge upon its economic prowess.

Details:

- The article argues that India's success in countering China's assertiveness will hinge upon completing the economic reforms begun in 1991, which will not only help India close the widening economic gap between India and China but also help it meet its immediate economic challenges.

Widening gap:

- China's economic opening-up in the '90s has left India behind in terms of volume of the economy, contributing to a military imbalance between the two countries.
 - In **1987, India and China's nominal GDP were almost equal**. However, **presently China's economy is nearly five times larger than India's**. Consequently, the military spending of the two countries which was roughly equal in 1989 has been widening.

India's economic challenges:

- India's pronounced economic slump, predating the epidemic, will add to the **economic impact of the pandemic**.
- The government's near-term attention may be consumed by tending to the needs of the poor. **Limited fiscal and monetary tools**, and dried-up private financing, constrain India's options.
- Heightened vigilance along the LAC demands summoning scarce resources. Defence budgets were already tightening.

Concerns:

Slowdown in reforms:

- The root causes of India's economic woes can be traced to a **slowdown in reforms**. In 1991, India enacted changes allowing markets to set commodity prices but did not similarly liberalise land, labour and capital.

Threat of protectionist approach:

- India's focus on self-reliance could **inhibit growth and constrain investment opportunities**.
- Though home-grown manufacturing of critical medicinal ingredients or digital safeguards on citizens' personal data help reduce vulnerabilities, conversely, imposing protective barriers to build-up the local defence industry would hamper defence acquisitions.
- In light of the pandemic, several businesses are looking to diversify their international value chains. India's economic competitors are staking their claim on regulatory predictability, stable tax policies, and fewer trade obstacles.
 - While India remains outside the [Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership](#), competitors are wooing companies seeking lower trade barriers. Asian countries are pushing ahead with trade deals with developed countries which **threaten to slice into India's exports**.
- Protectionist approach would **limit the availability of technology know-how and cost-efficient inputs from overseas** for use in higher value, manufactured exports from India.

Conclusion:

- India needs **structural economic reforms** which can lead to consistent high growth. Bold reforms offer the best option to manage China and achieve greater independence on the world stage.

F. Prelims Facts

1. Due process of law

- Due process is the legal requirement that the state must respect all legal rights that are owed to a person. Due process balances the power of law of the land and protects the individual person from it.
- Under due process, it is the legal requirement that the state must respect all of the legal rights that are owed to a person and laws that states enact must conform to the laws of the land like – fairness, fundamental rights, liberty, etc. It also gives the judiciary the power to access fundamental fairness, justice, and liberty of any legislation.
- This doctrine provides for more fair treatment of individual rights.

Note:

- “Procedure established by law” means a law duly enacted is valid even if it's contrary to the principles of justice and equity.
- The **Constitution of India** guarantees ‘**Procedure established by law**’ in Article 21 instead of the ‘**due process of law**’ as provided in the **American Constitution**.
- **Article 21:** No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to the procedure established by law.

Read more on [Article 21](#) at the linked article.

1. Foodgrain offtake by States rises sharply

- Relief measures being implemented in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic have paved the way for States and Union Territories in the country to draw more than double the quantity of rice for distribution during April to June this year, compared to the corresponding period last year.
- In the corresponding three months of 2019, the total amount of rice lifted by the States and Union Territories from the Food Corporation of India (FCI) under the Centre's various schemes was 90.71 lakh tonnes. In 2020, the figure is 192.34 lakh tonnes.

2. Govt. blocks 40 websites of Sikhs For Justice

- The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has issued orders for blocking 40 websites of the U.S.-based Sikhs For Justice (SFJ), which has been banned under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.
- The ban orders came on recommendations from the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).
- The outfit, which was banned by the MHA about a year ago, has been running an online campaign for recruiting supporters.

Read more about the [Unlawful Activities \(Prevention\) Act](#).

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements with respect to Global Environment Facility (GEF):

1. It was established on the eve of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit.
2. GEF Trust Fund is administered by the World Bank.
3. It serves as a financial mechanism for the Convention on Biological Diversity and UN Convention to Combat Desertification.

Which of the given statement/s is/are correct?

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 1 and 3 only
- c. 2 and 3 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: d

Explanation:

Global Environment Facility (GEF) was established on the eve of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. World Bank serves as the GEF Trustee, administering the GEF Trust Fund. The GEF serves as a financial mechanism to five conventions: Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), United Nations Framework Convention on

Climate Change (UNFCCC), Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), and Minamata Convention on Mercury.

Q2. Consider the following statements:

1. Compulsory License is the grant of permission by the government to entities to use, manufacture, import or sell a patented invention without the patent owner's consent.
2. Indian Patent Act, 1970 deals with compulsory licensing.
3. The TRIPS Agreement does not allow for the use of compulsory licences.

Which of the given statement/s is/are incorrect?

- a. 1 only
- b. 3 only
- c. 1 and 2 only
- d. None of the above

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: b

Explanation:

Indian Patent Act, 1970 deals with compulsory licensing. The TRIPS Agreement allows the use of compulsory licences. Compulsory licensing enables a competent government authority to license the use of a patented invention to a third party or government agency without the consent of the patent-holder.

Q3. Arrange the following Indian states in the ascending order of the length of boundary shared with Bhutan:

1. Sikkim
2. Assam
3. West Bengal
4. Arunachal Pradesh

Choose the correct option:

- a. 1, 3, 4, 2
- b. 1, 4, 3, 2
- c. 3, 1, 4, 2
- d. 1, 3, 2, 4

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: a

Explanation:

Indian states of Assam (267 km), Arunachal Pradesh (217 km), West Bengal (183 km), and Sikkim (32 km) share boundary with Bhutan.

Q4. Which of the following pairs of cyclone and naming country is/are correctly matched?

1. Cyclone Nisarga – India
2. Cyclone Amphan – Thailand
3. Cyclone Fani – Bangladesh

Options:

- a. 1, 2 and 3
- b. 1 and 2 only
- c. 2 and 3 only
- d. 2 only

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: c

Explanation:

Cyclone Nisarga and Fani were both named by Bangladesh. Cyclone Amphan was named by Thailand.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. The migrant workers face challenges in exercising their franchise and remain politically powerless. The 'One Nation One Voter ID' approach ensuring domestic ballot portability would truly empower the migrant voter. Comment. (15 marks, 250 words)
2. Analyze the importance of structural economic reforms to help close the widening economic gap between India and China, which would help India counter China's assertiveness and also help India meet its immediate economic challenges. (10 marks, 150 words)